

BOOK REVIEWS

Remus CREȚAN, Vasile FRATILA, *Dicționarul geografico-istoric și toponimic al județului Timiș (The Dictionary of Historical Geography and Toponomastics of the Timiș county)*. Location: Timișoara, Editura Universității de Vest, colecția Terra, 2007. 487 pages, 13 maps, 155 references. Price: 3 €, ISBN 978-973-7608-64-2.

“*The Dictionary of Historical Geography and Toponomastics of the Timiș county*” edited by Remus Crețan and Vasile Frățilă is part of the studies with high relevance in the fields of geographic, historic and linguistic researches. It is useful for local administration as well as for all persons interested in the past and present geographic peculiarities and the microtoponomastics specific to the pluriethnic and multicultural space of the Timiș county. The value and the usefulness of the research is argued by the documentation on multiple authorized sources, belonging to the main nationalities of Banat, the comparisons with present reality, the interdisciplinary character and the accurate form of presentation.

This is the first dictionary dealing in the same time both with the historical-geography and the toponomastics of all settlements in the Timiș county. The authors shows the diversity of toponymic layers and the present toponymic fund due to the ethnic groups who lived together for centuries in the Timiș county.

It was studied important works as the Toponymic dictionary of Banat, different historical dictionaries and studies written by Romanian (C. Suciu, N. Ilieșiu) and foreign authors (Korabinski, Vály, Fényes etc.). The main source comes from the microtoponymic fund existing at the State Archives and the Banat Museum, documents made by Nicolae Ilieșiu (1920-1921) and actualized by Mr. Crețan.

It is respected the scientific truth in correspondance to the exigences imposed by the Institute of Linguistics in Bucharest, the section of Onomastics.

The authors know very well the geography of Banat, especially its historical geography problems, presenting knowledge of great interest for many social-space practical activities.

The dictionary is made of synthetic information, necessary for other studies referring to the Timiș county and should contribute to the increase of the image of Timișoara geographical school.

**Prof. univ. dr. Nicolae POPA,
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Sorina VOICULESCU, Remus CREȚAN, *Cultural Geography. Topics, Evolution and Prospects*, Eurostampa Publishing House, Timisoara, 148 pages.

The work *Cultural Geography. Topics, Evolution and Prospects*, by Sorina Voiculescu - Senior Lecturer, Ph.D. and Remus Cretan - Professor, Ph.D., staff members of the Department of Geography of the Faculty of Chemistry, Biology and Geography at the Western University of Timișoara, is a first in the scientifically oriented geographic research on account of its generous subject matter, which has lately been arousing a keen interest in scientific circles and has been little or hardly ever subjected to serious academic research - except for a few sequential attempts, all the more so as Cultural Geography is somewhat a recent research area.

Structured on complex bibliographical sources and based on direct investigations made by the authors themselves while participating in study-abroad scholarship programs, this work provides its readers with the main elements and issues discussed in Cultural Geography. Elaborated in a clear, expressive, synthetic and coherent style and yet remaining true to its scientific prerequisites, the book was conceived to address an audience consisting mainly of college students, academic teaching staffs and experts involved in the area of Human Geography. The theoretical content is objectively illustrated in a rigorous scientific manner and contains many case studies and pictures allowing its readers to better understand the issues, topics and phenomena presented in the book.

The first ten chapters are exclusively dedicated to issues pertaining to Cultural Geography, while the remaining three chapters (authored by Professor, Remus Cretan, Ph. D.) focus on population-related issues of ethnicity, religion and language, thus composing a larger picture of culture and its manifestations worldwide, as seen from a diachronical and synchronic perspective.

Chapter I, titled *Social Geography: History and Evolution of Concepts* investigates the concept of Social Geography as viewed from the standpoint of the French and English geography schools and makes references to the people's way of life and the specific traditions prevailing both in the countryside and the urban areas, as well as to the relations existing between social and economic structures – on the one side – and human conscience on the other side. At the end of this chapter, all currently employed research methods available in Social & Cultural Geography are presented.

The second chapter of the book, *Cultural Geography*, introduces the concept of culture and cultural elements articulated by norms, rules, customs, knowledge, beliefs and values - beginning with traditional patterns up to the current way of life of specific

populaces. The concept of Cultural Geography is defined through close surveys of scientific bibliographies published in both the American and the French literature. The topics and issues of Cultural Geography are presented in Chapter III, which focuses on investigation methods such as observation, learning by observation and the perspective idea when studying the geographical space. Such a methodology is liable to objectively and realistically reflect the mechanisms guiding today's society and capable of structuring geographical spaces and reconfiguring landscapes. Landscapes are studied from a sociocultural viewpoint in Chapter IV, where ordinary landscapes are used as a starting point to describe the more structured and complex ones. Individualizing the landscapes is a course of action stimulated by the coat of arms of public authorities and by the characteristic features of every single community. The today's image and appearance of landscapes are directly related to communication and diffusion processes. The expansion of cultural values - starting from ancient dwellings and culminating with the most remote outreaches of our planet - is analyzed in Chapter V that deals thoroughly with diffusion and communication processes, interpreted as the main vector for the diffusion in time and space of cultural traits, processes and phenomena. Closely connected to the previous chapter, issues such as acculturation, assimilation, syncretism and transculturation are discussed here. These issues and problems are all the more important as they have generated and keep generating conflicts between different populations that are integrated at dissimilar levels on the space-time scale. Culture, as a system, is analyzed in Chapter VII by illustrating in an integrated manner all the cultural features and structures. The analysis of cultural landscapes in closing section of this chapter provides the transition to individual acclimatization to the environment – a phenomenon known as cultural ecology (issued studied in Chapter VIII).

In order to provide a more detailed and down-to-earth picture of culture in general, Chapter X presents from a regional perspective the elements related to architecture, material items and clothing – and this theoretical approach is based on photographs that render realism and veracity to the assertions and hypotheses made in this chapter.

The last three chapters of the book cast light on specific issues of Cultural Geography from the perspective of the planet's demographic structures. Such concepts as ethnicity, ethnic groups and minority, identity-related issues impacted by time and space, and the relations between politics and ethnicity are discussed here, while certain current ethnoterritorial disparities still existing in the world are analyzed through a causal and regional magnifying glass. Closely based on ethnicity, Chapter XII studies issues related to language by presenting the language families and dialectal issues still under debate. The impact of religion on landscape – through the agency of populaces – is presented in an analytical and causal form in the last chapter, in which a few concepts specific to the geography of religions are elucidated while explaining the diffusion of religions throughout the planet.

The accuracy of the language and the causal exposition of contents by means of specific models and illustrative material render authenticity to this scientific work and prove that geography as a science is able to provide new research methods and investigation methodologies that are in full compliance with today's dynamics of spatial systems.

The originality of the research and interpretation methods used in analyzing geographical phenomena and processes, the expressivity of the text and pictures, the bestseller - like style of writing in conjunction with the clear-cut approach to reality, as well

as the construction of an objective synthesis of all human communities living on our planet - all these are solid reasons for us to read this precious book. The book is genuinely appealing to its readers by virtue of all the attributes specified above and it may prove to be quite indispensable in the future study of Human Geography.

**Teaching Assistant Ioan Sebastian JUCU,
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Corneliu IAȚU, 2006, *Démographie et Géographie du travail en Roumanie postdécembriste*, Location: Iasi, Editura Sedcom Libris, 212 pages, 23 graphs, 69 maps, 7 tables, 53 references, ISBN: 973-670-171-9.

Le livre „*Démographie et géographie du travail en Roumanie postdécembriste*”, écrit par Corneliu Iatu, représente un étude très complexe sur les problèmes de notre pays, surtout après la fin du régime communiste.

Le plus important de ces problèmes est l'intensification de la migration, ayant comme principale cause, la cause économique qui a favorisé l'augmentation des taux du chômage (phénomène absent avant 1990).

Ce livre a été structuré sur quatre chapitres. Les deux premiers chapitres présentent la structure par sexes et par groupes d'âges de la population, les déséquilibres et les relations entre emploi et démographie, mettant en évidence le fait que la population jeune se trouve en baisse continue en tant que la population âgée gagne en importance de plus en plus. Le milieu rural se confronte ainsi avec le vieillissement de la population, ce qui a un grand impact dans plusieurs directions. Le plus affecté est le marché du travail et l'apparition du chômage qui, à son tour cause la migration de la population (ces aspects étant présentés dans les deux derniers chapitres du livre).

L'auteur valorise au maximum les données de l'Institut National de Statistique de Bucarest au niveau de chaque département du pays, réalisant 23 graphs et 69 maps rélevantes pour les aspects analysés.

Un grand nombre des livres de spécialité a été consulté, visant les problèmes géodémographiques et économiques de notre pays, l'auteur étant ainsi capable d'évidencier clairement l'image de la Roumanie postdécembriste, en sustenant que ce pays a un seul atout pour le présent et l'avenir, *un capital humain de très bonne qualité*.

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